



## Spot Report #9 (Final): Piney Point HRK Site

US Environmental Protection Agency

Report Date: 4/13/2021

**This is the final Spot Report for the HRK Holdings-Piney Point emergency response.**

**Overview:** On March 25, HRK Holdings LLC (the Site) observed the characteristics of a leak in a lined NGS South Compartment of a phosphogypsum stack at the Piney Point HRK Site in Palmetto, Florida. The compartment holds approximately 480 million gallons of a mixture of seawater and remnants of process water from historical fertilizer manufacturing operations at the Site. By April 1, it was reported that the leak had stopped but resumed on April 2, at a rate of 40-50 gallons per minute. On the morning of April 3, engineers discovered that the east wall of the lined compartment had shifted by several feet. Emergency bypassing of water from the compartment was discontinued on April 8. Unified command was stood down on April 9. The EPA OSC on-site will be released and will return to his duty station on April 14. No other EPA resources remain at the Site.

**State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions<sup>1</sup>:** On March 29, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection issued an Emergency Final Order to HRK Holdings LLC to address the leak and perform temporary emergency discharge to alleviate the risk of catastrophic release. A mandatory evacuation was issued by Manatee County on the evening of April 2, expanded on April 4 and lifted on April 6. It impacted 316 households. Both the State of Florida and Manatee County issued emergency declarations. The state declaration allowed for the full use of state resources necessary to respond to the incident. UC was stood up on April 3 and included HRK Holdings, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), and Manatee County EMA.

On April 5, the UC, in response to news reports concerning a second seepage event, released the following statement: "There have been news reports of a second area of

seepage from the east wall of the NGS-South compartment at Piney Point. These reports are unsubstantiated. A technical working group, including engineers and dam safety specialists from the FDEP, the FDEM, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Army Corps of Engineers and additional third-party engineers, was on-site today evaluating conditions and determined the site was safe to continue work.” There was no second seepage identified.

The following activities occurred during the April 12 through 13 period<sup>2</sup>:

- On April 10, the FDEP-contracted diver teams were able to complete the installation of a steel patch over the damaged liner, and the seep has ceased from the NGS-South compartment. The water from the NGS-South compartment is now being contained on-site. No water from the facility is entering tributaries or Tampa Bay at this time, and is expected to remain contained going forward.
- On April 13, approximately 222 million gallons remained in the NGS-South compartment.
- To date, approximately 215 million gallons have been discharged to Port Manatee.
- Teams are setting up a nutrient reduction and removal treatment system that will be used to treat water on-site to address future discharges, as necessary. FDEP’s goal is to ensure that any future required discharges to the port are treated to reduce nutrients entering surrounding waterways and minimize possible ecological impacts such as algal blooms.
- The FDEP continues to monitor and sample at multiple locations spanning a large portion of the Bay. The FDEP’s [interactive water quality dashboard](#) details sampling locations and corresponding results to evaluate any environmental impacts to Tampa Bay from the Piney Point releases. Results will continue to be posted as soon as they are available. The FDEP and the EPA are finalizing resource planning with a target to conduct ambient water split sampling in the Bay during the week of April 11.
- The Manatee County EOC has returned to normal operations (Level 3).

## **EPA Actions:**

### **Office of External Affairs (OEA)**

On April 6, the EPA Administrator sent a letter to the Governor of Florida expressing the Agency’s commitment to supporting the Piney Point HRK response.

## **Superfund and Emergency Management Division (SEMD)**

On April 5, the FL Outpost OSC transitioned from a Liaison role and joined the Unified Command. EPA OSC currently at site is demobilizing on April 14.

- A first round of effluent samples was pulled from Port Manatee and an on-site ditch containing wastewater on April 5. A first round sample from the NGS South Compartment was collected on April 6. This round of effluent samples which were taken to FDEP's lab for analysis. The results will be published by DEP [here](#) as soon as available.
- On April 8, an EPA OSC participated in a joint EPA/FDEP wastewater effluent sampling event. The OSC observed the State obtain a total of four samples of which two were provided to the EPA. The samples were obtained from within an on-site drainage ditch impacted by the wastewater seepage from the NGS South Compartment, and the other was an effluent sample taken at the discharge point within Port Manatee. On April 8, samples were shipped to the EPA R4 Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division (LSASD) Laboratory in Athens, GA for chemical analysis and the National Analytical Radiation Environmental Laboratory (NAREL) in Montgomery, AL for radionuclide analysis.
- The REOC has established an Environmental Unit to manage analytical data reported by LSASD.
- Environmental Unit requested an EPA risk assessor to assist with interpreting the Bay sampling and effluent data.
- REOC will return to Level 3 (steady-state operations) at the close of business April 14.

## **Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division (LSASD)**

- On April 12, LSASD completed analysis of effluent samples collected on April 8. The data package was routed to the Environmental Unit.
- LSASD has shipped multiple sampling containers and coolers to FDEP to support their sampling effort.
- FDEP and the LSASD are coordinating resource logistics for splitting ambient water samples from 12 or more locations throughout the Bay.

## **Water Division**

- Water Division personnel are staffing the Environmental Unit.
- The EPA R4 Water Division continues to review sampling data as results become available.

**Media Interest:** High

### **Media Links:**

<https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/news/disaster/2021/04/08/polluted-wastewater-piney-point-into-tampa-bay-reduced-90/7140349002/>

[FDEP Piney Point Incident Website](#)

**Note: The EPA will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed**

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